

## Welcome to Hells Canyon Wilderness

### Hells Canyon National Recreation Area

Hells Canyon National Recreation Area was established by Congress in 1975 to preserve and protect its natural beauty, historical, archaeological, ecological, and recreational values. Hells Canyon National Recreation Area encompasses 650,000 acres in both Idaho and Oregon, and includes designated wilderness, wild and scenic river corridors, developed recreation sites, and dispersed recreation areas. Presented on this handout is the trail system for Idaho's 76,721 acre portion of Hells Canyon Wilderness.

There are 208 total miles of trails within the Idaho portion of Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. These trails are located in both wilderness and dispersed recreation areas. Maintenance levels of these trails vary, and are largely dependent upon the management strategy established for the area. Primary trails are maintained on a yearly basis, and the secondary trails are maintained on a three-year rotational basis. Heavy brush and downfall may be encountered on these trails. Carrying a small cruisers axe or handsaw can help stockmen clear the trail if obstructions are encountered. For information about current trail conditions, please contact our office in Riggins at (208) 628-3916.

There are two major trailheads in Idaho that access Hells Canyon Wilderness. Of these, the most popular is Windy Saddle Trailhead, located seventeen miles up Forest Road 517, just south of Riggins off Highway 95. This is the main trailhead for the twenty-seven mile loop trail, which accesses the Seven Devils peaks and many alpine lakes. The Windy Saddle Horse facilities, Windy Saddle Campground, Seven Devils Campground, and Heaven's Gate Lookout are all in close proximity to this trailhead. The second trailhead accesses the south end of the Hells Canyon Wilderness at Black Lake. Black Lake is located 40 miles north of Council, Idaho, at the end of Forest Road 112. There is a small campground at this location. Six Lakes Basin, Emerald Lake, and the headwaters of the Rapid River drainage are just a few of the areas that are accessible from this trailhead. Roads to these locations are seasonal. Please check with the nearest Forest Service office prior to your travels.

A third trailhead is located at Pittsburg Landing. This trailhead accesses the Wild and Scenic Snake River corridor, and is the beginning of the 26-mile Snake River National Recreation Trail. To get to Pittsburg Landing, leave Highway 95 just south of White Bird, Idaho, and follow Forest Road 493 seventeen miles to Upper Pittsburg Landing on the Snake River. This road is open year round, requiring 4-wheel drive and chains in the winter months. Potable water may or may not be available during the summer months at the Lower Pittsburg Landing Campground.

### Backcountry Horsemen

Windy Saddle Horse facilities provide an overnight area for stockmen. There is a loading dock for stock trucks and hitch rails are provided at each campsite. Water for stock is located one-quarter mile out on trail 124, the Seven Devils Loop Trail. The trough location is signed from the trail.

*Effective May 2001, hitching or tethering of horses or other saddle or pack animals to trees at campsites except for the purposes of loading, unloading, saddling, and unsaddling is prohibited in Hells Canyon Wilderness Area (36 CFR, Sec. 261.50(a)).* Please use high lines, hobbles, picket lines, or portable electric fences when restraining stock overnight in the wilderness. Keep stock at least 200 feet away from shorelines and riparian areas. Use cinch lashes or tree saver straps when highlines are established. This helps prevent

damage to trees. When breaking camp, scatter horse manure. This helps it decompose more rapidly and helps control fly problems. Feed is limited in many areas of the Hells Canyon Wilderness, so it is best to plan to pack in supplemental, pelletized, weed free feed. The best areas for camping with stock are designated by an "H" on the map. Water and limited grazing opportunities are available at most of these sites. Since the terrain in Hells Canyon is extremely rough and rocky, unshod animals are not recommended. Llama and goat packing are becoming more and more popular, so please be aware that you may encounter these animals along the trail.

### Special Wilderness Considerations

- ✓ **Party size is limited to eight people and sixteen head of stock.**
- ✓ Treat all water before drinking. This can be easily accomplished by boiling hard for five minutes, filtering through a hand pump designated for water purification, or by using iodine tablets.
- ✓ Keep fires small and in safe areas. Don't build rock rings. Be sure your fire is "dead out", and naturalize the area before leaving. Check with the wilderness rangers, the bulletin boards at the trailheads, or at the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area office in Riggins for current fire regulations.
- ✓ Help keep our trails in good shape! Kick a rock, throw a stick, and clear a log. Any help you can provide in keeping trails clear of obstructions is greatly appreciated. Do not cut switchbacks. This causes erosion problems and creates unsightly scars on the land.
- ✓ Bury all human waste and toilet paper at least 200 feet from water sources and at least six to eight inches deep. This allows for better sanitation and more rapid natural decomposition of wastes.
- ✓ Pack out all garbage. Animals will dig up and scatter buried garbage. Many things such as eggshells and aluminum will not completely burn in a small fire.
- ✓ Use biodegradable soaps. Do not wash in lakes or streams. Carry wash water at least 100 feet away from water source to use. Dispose of gray water on the ground, not back in the lakes or streams.
- ✓ The building of camp "improvements" is discouraged in Hells Canyon Wilderness. Your assistance in removing such structures is greatly appreciated.
- ✓ Consider the use of portable gas stoves instead of fires for cooking.
- ✓ Please camp at least 200 feet away from lakeshores and riparian areas.
- ✓ Hikers, please yield the right of way to any stock, riding or packing. Talk to the horseman as they approach. Step off the trail to allow them to pass. The horseman can advise you which side of the trail is best for you to step off on. Doing this can avoid injury to yourself as well as the stock.
- ✓ **Please "leave no trace" by practicing minimum impact camping techniques in Hells Canyon Wilderness.**

National Forest maps (Nez Perce, Payette, Wallowa-Whitman) and local USGS quadrangle maps are available for sale at our Riggins office. These items can also be purchased at the Slate Creek Ranger Station, Grangeville Book Store, or May Hardware in McCall, Id.

**We hope you have a safe and enjoyable wilderness experience. Your questions and comments are welcome.**

Thank you,  
The Hells Canyon Wilderness Crew